

ASSEMBLY BILL NO. 3267
(First Reprint)

To the General Assembly:

Pursuant to Article V, Section I, Paragraph 14 of the New Jersey Constitution, I herewith return Assembly Bill No. 3267 (First Reprint) without my approval.

This bill would impose a new five-cent per bag fee on certain single-use carryout bags. I applaud the Legislature for its efforts to address this critical policy area. Single-use carryout bags -- particularly plastic bags -- represent a significant source of the litter that clutters our communities and mars New Jersey's beautiful shoreline and parks. These bags find their way onto New Jersey's beaches and into our cities' sewer systems. They are capable of not only ruining a day down the shore but, in large numbers, can cripple water infrastructure in urban areas. Perhaps just as importantly, plastic bags present a real threat to critical wildlife throughout New Jersey and off our magnificent shores.

As a society, we must break our dependence on single-use bags when going about our daily routines and instead commit ourselves to sustainable alternatives. Our responsibilities as stewards of the environment and our natural resources demand nothing less. I am committed to taking bold but necessary steps in order to protect our environment and firmly believe that we must look forward and implement programs designed for the future.

With these principles in mind, and in light of the realities outlined above, I cannot support this bill. While well intentioned, the approach reflected in this bill strikes me as incomplete and insufficient. Instituting a five-cent fee on single-use bags that only applies to certain retailers does not go far enough to address the problems created by overreliance on

plastic bags and other single-use carryout bags. In order to make a real difference, a single-use bag program must be devised and applied more broadly and consistently in a manner that would avoid loopholes that undermine the ultimate purpose of the program. Moreover, fee-based programs aimed at reducing the use of plastic bags have been utilized by major localities such as Washington, D.C. for nearly a decade. While these localized programs have generally been successful, the time has come for a more robust and comprehensive method of reducing the number of single-use bags in our State.

I look forward to working with legislative leadership to create a progressive, effective program to address this issue and move New Jersey in the right direction. Indeed, the Legislature has already taken an important step in this regard. Last week, a joint hearing of the Senate Environment and Energy Committee and the Assembly Environment and Solid Waste Committee considered how to properly address single-use plastic bags, as well as other plastic waste, and the environmental impacts resulting from their continued overuse. I am heartened by the thoughtful and constructive discussion that resulted from the hearing and am eager to work collaboratively with my legislative colleagues to craft more concrete solutions to this issue.

Accordingly, I herewith return Assembly Bill No. 3267 (First Reprint) without my approval.

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Respectfully,
/s/ Philip D. Murphy
Governor

Attest:

/s/ Matthew J. Platkin
Chief Counsel to the Governor